

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1 - 10 (Cancelled).

11. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask by performing a series of pattern-forming steps such as a step for forming a resist layer on a photomask blank, a step for exposing and patterning said resist layer, a developing step, a step for etching said photomask blank and a step for removing the resist layer, wherein the method is characterized in that patterns to be transferred onto a wafer are formed on said photomask blank for the chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask according to ~~the a dry-etching method as set forth in claim 1~~ comprising dry-etching a metal thin film as a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film, wherein the method is characterized by using, as an etching gas, a mixed gas including (a) a reactive ion etching gas, which contains an oxygen-containing gas and a halogen-containing gas, and (b) a reducing gas added to the gas component (a), in the process for dry-etching the metal thin film to thus give a photomask.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask by performing a series of pattern-forming steps such as a step for forming a resist layer on a photomask blank, a step for exposing and patterning said resist layer, a developing step, a step for etching said photomask blank and a step for removing the resist layer, wherein the method is characterized in that patterns to be transferred onto a wafer are formed on said photomask blank for the chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask according to ~~the a dry-etching method as set forth in claim 2~~ comprising dry-etching a metal thin film as a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film, wherein the method is characterized by using, as an etching gas, a mixed gas including (a) a reactive ion etching gas, which contains an

oxygen-containing gas and a halogen-containing gas, and (b) a reducing gas added to the gas component (a), in the process for dry-etching the metal thin film, wherein said metal thin film is a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film consisting of a chromium film, a chromium oxide film, a chromium nitride film, chromium oxynitride film, chromium fluoride film or a laminated film thereof to thus give a photomask.

13. (Currently Amended) A chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask which is prepared by performing a series of pattern-forming steps such as a step for forming a resist layer on a photomask blank, a step for exposing and patterning said resist layer, a developing step, a step for etching said photomask blank and a step for removing said resist layer, wherein the photomask is characterized in that patterns to be transferred onto a wafer are formed on said photomask blank for the chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask according to the a dry-etching method as set forth in claim 1 comprising dry-etching a metal thin film as a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film, wherein the method is characterized by using, as an etching gas, a mixed gas including (a) a reactive ion etching gas, which contains an oxygen-containing gas and a halogen-containing gas, and (b) a reducing gas added to the gas component (a), in the process for dry-etching the metal thin film.

14. (Currently Amended) A chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask which is prepared by performing a series of pattern-forming steps such as a step for forming a resist layer on a photomask blank, a step for exposing and patterning said resist layer, a developing step, a step for etching said photomask blank and a step for removing said resist layer, wherein the photomask is characterized in that patterns to be transferred onto a wafer are formed on said photomask blank for the chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask according to the a dry-etching method as set forth in claim 2 comprising dry-etching a metal thin film as a chromium-containing half-tone

phase-shift film, wherein the method is characterized by using, as an etching gas, a mixed gas including (a) a reactive ion etching gas, which contains an oxygen-containing gas and a halogen-containing gas, and (b) a reducing gas added to the gas component (a), in the process for dry-etching the metal thin film, wherein said metal thin film is a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film consisting of a chromium film, a chromium oxide film, a chromium nitride film, chromium oxynitride film, chromium fluoride film or a laminated film thereof.

Claims 15 - 20 (Cancelled).